NUMB. CCCLXXI.

The SPECTATOR.

Jamné igitur laudas quod de ſapientibùs unus
Ridebat?——— JUV.

Tueſday, May 6. 1712.

Shall communicate to my Reader the following Letter for the Entertainment of this Day.

SIR,

YOU know very well that our Nation is more famous for that ſort of Men who are called *Whims* and *Humoriſts*, than any other Country in the World, for which reaſon it is obſerv'd that our *Engliſh* Comedy excells that of all other Nations in the Novelty and Variety of its Characters.

Among thoſe innumerable Setts of *Whims* which our Country produces, there are none whom I have regarded with more Curioſity than thoſe who have invented any particular kind of Diverſion for the Entertainment of themſelves or their Friends. My Letter ſhall ſingle out thoſe who take delight in ſorting a Company that has ſomething of Burleſque and Ridicule in its appearance. I ſhall make my ſelf underſtood by the following Example. One of the Wits of the laſt Age, who was a Man of a good Eſtate, thought he never laid out his Money better than in a Jeſt. As he was one Year at the *Bath*, obſerving that in the great Confluence of fine People there were ſeveral among them with long Chins, a part of the Viſage by which he himſelf was very much diſtinguiſhed, he invited to Dinner half a Score of theſe remarkable Perſons who had their Mouths in the middle of their Faces. They had no ſooner placed themſelves about the Table, but they began to ſtare upon one another, not being able to imagine what had brought them together. Our *Engliſh* Proverb ſays,

'Tis merry in the Hall,
When Beards wag all.

and proved ſo in the Aſſembly I am now ſpeaking of, who ſeeing ſo many Peaks of Faces agitated with Eating, Drinking and Diſcourſe, and obſerving all the Chins that were preſent meeting together very often over the Center of the Table, every one grew ſenſible of the Jeſt, and came into it with ſo much good Humour, that they lived in mutual Friendſhip and Alliance from that Day forward.

The ſame Gentleman ſome time after packed together a Sett of Oglers, as he called them, conſiſting of ſuch as had an unlucky Caſt in their Eyes: His Diverſion on this occaſion was to ſee the croſs Bows, miſtaken Signs, and wrong Connivances that paſſed amidſt ſo many broken and refracted Rays of Sight.

The third Feaſt which this merry Gentleman exhibited was to the Stammerers, whom he got together in a ſufficient Body to fill his Table. He had order'd one of his Servants, who was placed behind a Skreen, to write down their Table-Talk, which was very eaſie to be done, without the help of Short-hand. It appears by the Notes which were taken, that tho' their Converſation never fell, there were not above twenty Words ſpoken during the firſt Courſe; that upon ſerving up the ſecond, one of the Company was a quarter of an Hour in telling them, that the Ducklins and Sparrow-graſs were very good; and that another took up the ſame time in declaring himſelf of the ſame Opinion. This Jeſt did not, however, go off ſo well as either of the former; for one of the Gueſts being a brave Man, and fuller of Reſentment than he knew how to expreſs, went out of the Room, and ſent the facetious Inviter a Challenge in Writing, which tho' it was afterwards dropp'd by the Interpoſition of Friends, put a Stop to theſe ludicrous Entertainments.

Now, Sir, I dare ſay you will agree with me, that as there is no Moral in theſe Jeſts they ought to be diſcouraged, and looked upon rather as Pieces of Unluckineſs, than Wit. However as it is natural for one Man to refine upon the Thought of another, and impoſſible for any ſingle Perſon, how great ſoever his Parts may be, to invent an Art, and bring it to its utmoſt Perfection, I ſhall here give you an Account of an honeſt Gentleman of my Acquaintance, who upon hearing the Character of the Wit abovementioned has himſelf aſſumed it, and endeavoured to convert it to the Benefit of Mankind. He invited half a dozen of his Friends one day to Dinner, who were each of them famous for inſerting ſeveral redundant Phraſes in their Diſcourſe, as *d'y' hear me*, *d'y' ſee*, *that is*, *and ſo Sir*. Each of the Gueſts making frequent uſe of his particular Elegance appeared ſo ridiculous to his Neighbour, that he could not but reflect upon himſelf as appearing equally ridiculous to the reſt of the Company; by this means, before they had ſate long together, every one talking with the greateſt Circumſpection

and

'and carefully avoiding his favourite Expletive, the 'Converſation was cleared of its Redundancies, 'and had a greater quantity of Senſe tho' leſs of 'Sound in it.

'The ſame well-meaning Gentleman took occa- 'ſion, at another time, to bring together ſuch of 'his Friends as were addicted to a fooliſh habitual 'Cuſtom of ſwearing. In order to ſhew them the 'Abſurdity of the Practice, he had recourſe to the 'Invention abovementioned, having placed an *Ai- 'manuenſis* in a private part of the Room. After 'the ſecond Bottle, when Men open their Minds 'without Reſerve, my honeſt Friend begun to take 'notice of the many ſonorous but unneceſſary 'Words that had paſſed in his Houſe ſince their 'ſitting down at Table, and how much good Con- 'verſation they had loſt by giving way to ſuch ſu- 'perfluous Phraſes. What a Tax, ſays he, would 'they have raiſed for the Poor, had we put the 'Laws in execution upon one another! Every one 'of them took this gentle Reproof in good part: 'Upon which he told them, that knowing their 'Converſation would have no Secrets in it, he had 'ordered it to be taken down in Writing, and for 'the humour ſake would read it to them, if they 'pleaſed. There were Ten ſheets of it, which 'might have been reduced to two, had there not 'been thoſe abominable Interpolations I have be- 'fore mentioned. Upon the reading of it in cold 'Blood, it looked rather like a Conference of Fiends 'than of Men. In ſhort, every one trembled at 'himſelf upon hearing calmly what he had pronoun- 'ced amidſt the Heat and Inadvertency of Diſcourſe.

'I ſhall only mention another Occaſion where- 'in he made uſe of the ſame Invention to cure 'a different kind of Men, who are the Peſts of 'all polite Converſation, and murder Time as 'much as either of the two former, though 'they do it more innocently; I mean that dull 'Generation of Story-tellers. My Friend got to- 'gether about half a dozen of his Acquaintance, 'who were infected with this ſtrange Malady. 'The firſt Day one of them ſitting down, enter'd 'upon the Siege of *Namur*, which laſted till four 'a-Clock, their time of parting. The ſecond Day 'a *North-Britain* took Poſſeſſion of the Diſcourſe, 'which it was impoſſible to get out of his Hands 'ſo long as the Company ſtaid together. The third 'Day was engroſſed, after the ſame manner, by a 'Story of the ſame length. They at laſt begun to re- 'flect upon this barbarous way of treating one ano- 'ther, and by this means awaken'd out of that Le- 'thargy with which each of them had been ſeized 'for ſeveral Years.

'As you have ſomewhere declared that extraor- 'dinary and uncommon Characters of Mankind are 'the Game which you delight in, and as I look up- 'on you to be the greateſt Sportſman, or, if you 'pleaſe, the *Nimrod* among this Species of Writers, 'I thought this Diſcovery would not be unaccepta- 'to you.

I am,

SIR, &c.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

At the Deſire of ſeveral Ladies of Quality,

For the Benefit of Mrs. Bicknell.

By Her Majeſty's Company of Comedians,

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, this preſent Tueſday, the 6th Day of May, will be Preſented a Comedy call'd The Conſtant Couple: Or, a Trip to the Jubilee. The Part of Sir Harry Wildair by Mr. Wilks, Lady Lurewell by Mrs. Oldfield, and all the other Parts to the beſt Advantage. With Entertainments of Dancing by Mr. Prince, Mr. Thurmond and Mrs. Bicknell. By her Majeſty's Command no Perſons are to be admitted behind the Scenes.

This Day begins to be Sold by Auction, a curious Collection of Spaniſh, Italian, Latin, French and Engliſh Books, being part of the Library of Sir William Temple, Bart. with ſeveral Claſſicks Printed by Old Elzevir, likewiſe cum Notis Variorum. With a Collection of Original Prints, conſiſting of Roman Statues and other Antiquities. To be Sold in the Inner Walk of Exeter Exchange in the Strand. After which will come on a very curious and choice Collection of Phyſical Books; being the Library of a late eminent Phyſician. N. B. Hiſtoria des Indias Occidentales per Herrera, Anno 1601. is in 8 Parts, compleat, and bound in three Vols. tho' the Catalogue mentions but two Vols.

☞ An extraordinary Collection of Original Pictures by the moſt celebrated Italian Maſters, viz. Corregio, Titian, Paulo Veroneſe, Julio Romano, Tintoret, Palma, Baſſan, Carracci, Michael Angelo de Battaglio, Borgognon, Franceſco Bologneſe, Vivian, and others, will be Sold by Auction on Thurſday the 8th of May inſtant, at Mr. Pelletier's next Houſe to the Wheatſheaf, in Henrietta-ſtreet, Covent-Garden; where the Pictures may be ſeen this Day and to-morrow, and Catalogues had, alſo at Mr. Greffan's at the two Flower Pots in Sommerſet-Houſe Stable-yard in the Strand. Note, That moſt of theſe Pictures are an entire Collection bought in Italy by a curious Gentleman in his Travels, and never before expoſed to View in England.

This Day is Publiſhed,

A full Confutation of Witchcraft. More particularly of the Depoſitions againſt Jane Wenham, lately Condemn'd for a Witch at Hertford, in which the Modern Notions of Witchcraft are Overthrown, and the ill Conſequences of ſuch Doctrines are expos'd. In a Letter from a Phyſician in Hertfordſhire to his Friend in London. Price 6d. Sold by J. Baker in Peter-Noſter-Row; wherein may be had the Impoſſibility of Witchcraft by another Author. Price 6d.

This Day is Publiſhed, the Second Edition of

The Diſtreſt Mother. A Tragedy. As it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. By her Majeſty's Servants. Written by Mr. Philips. Printed for S. Buckley at the Dolphin in Little-Britain, and J. Tonſon at Shakeſpear's Head over againſt Catherine-ſtreet in the Strand.

The Retir'd Gard'ner, or, Dialogues between a Gentleman and a Gard'ner: Containing the Methods of Making, Ordering and Improving a Fruit and Kitchin-Garden; together with the Manner of Planting and Cultivating Flowers, Plants, Shrubs and Under-Shrubs, neceſſary for the Adorning of Gardens, &c. In which is explain'd, the Art of Making and Diſpoſing of Parterres, Arbours of Greens, Wood-Works, Archer, Columns, and other Pieces and Compartments uſually found in the moſt Beautiful Gardens of Country-Seats. The whole enrich'd with Variety of Figures, being a Tranſlation from the Sieur Louis Liger. To which is added, a Deſcription and Plan of Count Tallard's Garden at Nottingham. The whole Reviſ'd, with ſeveral Alterations and Additions, which render it proper for our Engliſh Culture, by George London, and Henry Wiſe. Printed for Jacob Tonſon at Shakeſpear's Head over-againſt Catherine-Street in the Strand.

The Works of Mr. Francis Beaumont and Mr. John Fletcher, in 7 Vols. 8vo. adorn'd with Cuts. Plutarch's Lives in 5 Vols. tranſlated by ſeveral hands. Seneca's Morals tranſlated by Sir Roger L'Eſtrange. The Satyrs of Decimus Junius Juvenalis &c. tranſlated into Engliſh Verſe by Mr. Dryden and ſeveral other eminent Hands. The Works of Mr. Congreve in 3 Vols. conſiſting of his Plays and Poems. Poems on ſeveral Occaſions written by Mr. Prior. Paradiſe loſt, a Poem, in 12 Books, by Mr. John Milton. The Chriſtian Hero, written by Mr. Steele. N. B. The three laſt are printed with a neat Engliſh Letter in ſmall Pocket Volumes: All Printed for Jacob Tonſon at Shakeſpear's Head over-againſt Catherine-ſtreet in the Strand.

LONDON: Printed for *Sam. Buckley*, at the *Dolphin* in *Little-Britain*; and Sold by *A. Baldwin* in *Warwick-Lane*; where Advertiſements are taken in; as alſo by *Charles Lillie*, Perfumer, at the Corner of *Beaufort-Buildings* in the *Strand*.